

(Washington, DC)— Congresswoman Gwen Moore (D-Wisc.) today visited the Isaac Coggs Heritage Health Center in Milwaukee to speak at the third annual Back to School Wellness Festival. The event, which lasted from noon until 4 p.m., included free screenings for HIV, cholesterol, glucose and blood pressure. Children's entertainment and an expo with more than 30 community organizations were also featured.

As Members of Congress from all over the country have returned to their districts for the August work period, they have brought the debate over health care reform home with them. Congresswoman Moore believes that Community Health Centers are a critical component of the nation's health care system, because they administer preventative care that helps stave off costly and life-threatening diseases. Congresswoman Moore's visit to the Isaac Coggs Heritage Health Center comes on the heels of a health care information session she held Tuesday evening at Milwaukee's North Division High School to share information and clear up misconceptions about the proposed health care legislation that the House of Representatives is expected to consider this fall.

"We're at a critical juncture in the debate over health care in this nation," Congresswoman Moore said. "Our current system is economically unsustainable, and despite having the most expensive health care system in the world, our country is not necessarily any healthier.

"Access to primary care, preventative care, wellness and nutrition counseling help prevent chronic illnesses like obesity, diabetes, heart disease and high-blood pressure that consume 85 percent of the health care spending in our country. In addition to being an economic issue, being able to access this care is a quality of life issue for all of our citizens. The programs offered at the Isaac Coggs Heritage Health Center are crucial to promoting healthy living for the people who get their services here. I am proud to support the Community Health Centers that are on the front lines of fighting these chronic health issues."

Federally-funded health clinics like Isaac Coggs provide health services to generally underserved populations, such as those who cannot afford health care, are impeded by language or cultural difficulties, or whose communities lack sufficient health professionals. One in every 19 people living in the U.S. now relies on one of these federally-funded clinics for primary care. Nearly 40 percent of patients treated have no health insurance and one-third are children.

Community Health Centers are now providing increased comprehensive services. For example, in 2007 almost 2.8 million patients received dental services, more than 470,000 visited community centers for mental health care, and 92,000 patients made 916,000 visits to health centers for substance abuse treatment.

The Isaac Coggs Health Center is part of Milwaukee Health Services Inc. (MHSI), which has one other location on Martin Luther King Drive in Milwaukee. In 2008, MHSI served 30,129 patients, who accounted for 95,225 medical, oral and behavioral health-related visits.

In 2008, the MHSI's patient base was 85.5% African-American, 12.4% White, and 4.3% Hispanic. As is their mission, MHSI provided more than \$3 million of uncompensated care in 2008. Thirty percent of their patients were uninsured, 63.4% had some source of public funding for medical care, and commercial funding (6.6%) comprised the difference.

Already, MHSI has received nearly \$2 million in Recovery Act funds. About \$369,406 of these dollars have already been used to cover the costs of one dentist and one hygienist. In addition, Congresswoman Moore secured \$100,000 for MHSI in a bill passed by the House of Representatives this year to expand its MLK health center facility, which would allow for additional health care services to be provided to women and infants. The funds would also support early intervention services that help prevent young women from getting pregnant or contracting an STD. The Senate must now approve these funds.

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